

**IN THE UNITED STATES DISTRICT COURT  
FOR THE MIDDLE DISTRICT OF PENNSYLVANIA**

<b>CHARLES FLOYD, JR.,</b>	:	<b>CIVIL NO. 3:14-CV-2279</b>
	:	
<b>Petitioner</b>	:	<b>(Judge Munley)</b>
	:	
<b>v.</b>	:	
	:	
<b>COMMONWEALTH, PA STATE ATTORNEY GENERAL,</b>	:	
	:	
<b>Respondents</b>	:	

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**MEMORANDUM**

On December 1, 2014, petitioner Charles Floyd, Jr. (“petitioner” or “Floyd”), a pre-trial detainee presently confined at the Dauphin County Prison, Harrisburg, Pennsylvania, initiated the above petition for writ of habeas corpus pursuant to 28 U.S.C. § 2254. (Doc. 1). The petition has been given preliminary consideration pursuant to Rule 4 of the Rules Governing Section 2254 Cases in the United States District Courts, 28 U.S.C. foll. § 2254 (1977)<sup>1</sup> and, it is concluded that the petition is subject to summary dismissal because there are ongoing state court criminal proceedings.

**I. Background**

Floyd alleges that he was arrested on February 11, 2014. (Doc. 1, p. 1). He contends

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<sup>1</sup>Rule 4, which governs preliminary review of petitions, states that “[i]f it plainly appears from the petition and any attached exhibits that the petitioner is not entitled to relief in the district court, the judge must dismiss the petition and direct the clerk to notify the petitioner.” A petition may be dismissed without review of an answer when the petition is frivolous, or obviously lacking in merit, or where . . . the necessary facts can be determined from the petition itself. . . .” Allen v. Perini, 424 F.2d 134, 141 (6th Cir. 1970).

that, since his arrest, *inter alia*, he has been threatened with drug charges, “called into court” and forced to waive the reading of charges, denied discovery in the form of hearing transcripts, denied exculpatory evidence, and denied the effective assistance of counsel. (Id. at pp. 1-2). He is seeking release from “illegal restraint.” (Id. at 4).

According to the electronic dockets in Court of Common Pleas of Dauphin County Criminal Case Numbers CP-22-CR-0001859-2014 and CP-22-CR-0002889-2014, retrieved from Pennsylvania’s Unified Judicial System, <http://ujportal.pacourts.us.>, both matters are currently pending in the trial court and petitioner is awaiting trial.

## **II. Discussion**

Pursuant to 28 U.S.C. § 2254, a person in state custody may file an application for a writ of habeas corpus challenging the fact or length of his or her confinement. See Preiser v. Rodriguez, 411 U.S. 475, 494 (1973); Tedford v. Hepting, 990 F.2d 745, 748 (3d Cir. 1993). However, this section specifically provides that the person must be in custody pursuant to the judgment of a State court. See 28 U.S.C. § 2254(a). It is apparent from the instant petition that Floyd has not yet been tried or convicted on the criminal charges he faces in Dauphin County, and, thus, he is not yet in custody pursuant to the judgment of a state court.

Notwithstanding this deficiency, generally, federal courts must adjudicate all cases and controversies that are properly before them. New Orleans Pub. Serv., Inc. v. Council of City of New Orleans, 491 U.S. 350, 358 (1989). Abstention, however, “is the judicially created doctrine under which a federal court will decline to exercise its jurisdiction so that a state court or state agency will have the opportunity to decide the matters at issue.” Heritage

Farms, Inc. v. Solebury Twp., 671 F.2d 743, 746 (3d Cir. 1982). In Younger v. Harris, the United States Supreme Court “established a principle of abstention when federal adjudication would disrupt an ongoing state criminal proceeding.” Yang v. Tsui, 416 F.3d 199, 202 (3d Cir. 2005) (discussing Younger, 401 U.S. 37 (1971)). The Younger Court based its decision on the principles of comity and “the longstanding public policy against federal court interference with state court proceedings.” Younger, 401 U.S. at 43. Younger abstention applies when the following three requirements are met: “(1) there are ongoing state proceedings that are judicial in nature; (2) the state proceedings implicate important state interests; and (3) the state proceedings afford an adequate opportunity to raise the federal claims.” Lazaridis v. Wehmer, 591 F.3d 666, 670 (3d Cir. 2010) (quoting Addiction Specialists, Inc. v. Twp. of Hampton, 411 F.3d 399, 408 (3d Cir. 2005)).

Notably, even when all requirements are met, abstention is not appropriate when the following extraordinary circumstances exist: “(1) the state proceedings are being undertaken in bad faith or for purposes of harassment or (2) some other extraordinary circumstances exist, such as proceedings pursuant to a flagrantly unconstitutional statute. . . .” Schall v. Jovce, 885 F.2d 101, 106 (3d Cir. 1989). These exceptions are to be narrowly construed. Loftus v. Twp. of Lawrence Park, 764 F. Supp. 354, 357 (W.D. Pa. 1991).

It is clear that Floyd is involved in ongoing criminal proceedings which implicate important state interests. It also appears from review of the electronic dockets in Court of Common Pleas of Dauphin County Criminal Case Numbers CP-22-CR-0001859-2014 and CP-22-CR-0002889-2014, that he has failed to take advantage of the state court proceedings

available to him. Although he is actively engaged in motion practice, there is no record of him having availed himself of state court procedure by seeking relief in the Court of Common Pleas or an appeal to the Pennsylvania Superior Court from his alleged illegal incarceration. Because there is relief available at the state court level, there is an absence of extraordinary circumstances that would warrant the intervention of a federal court on this issue. Thus, out of deference to the state judicial process, it is appropriate to abstain from entertaining the petition. Indeed, “[i]n no area of the law is the need for a federal court to stay its hand pending completion of state proceedings more evident than in the case of pending criminal proceedings.” Evans v. Court of Common Pleas, 959 F.2d 1227, 1234 (3d Cir. 1992).

### **III. Conclusion**

Based on the foregoing, the petition will be dismissed without prejudice.

### **IV. Certificate of Appealability**

Pursuant to 28 U.S.C. § 2253(c), unless a circuit justice or judge issues a certificate of appealability (“COA”), an appeal may not be taken from a final order in a proceeding under 28 U.S.C. § 2254. A COA may issue only if the applicant has made a substantial showing of the denial of a constitutional right. 28 U.S.C. § 2253(c)(2). “A petitioner satisfies this standard by demonstrating that jurists of reason could disagree with the district court’s resolution of his constitutional claims or that jurists could conclude the issues presented are adequate to deserve encouragement to proceed further.” Miller-El v. Cockrell, 537 U.S. 322 (2003). “When the district court denies a habeas petition on procedural grounds without

reaching the prisoner's underlying constitutional claim, a COA should issue when the prisoner shows, at least, that jurists of reason would find it debatable whether the petition states a valid claim of the denial of a constitutional right and that jurists of reason would find it debatable whether the district court was correct in its procedural ruling." Slack v. McDaniel, 529 U.S. 473, 484 (2000). Here, jurists of reason would not find the procedural disposition of this case debatable. Accordingly, there is no basis for the issuance of a COA.

An appropriate order will issue.

**BY THE COURT:**



**JUDGE JAMES M. MUNLEY**  
**United States District Court**

Dated: January 16, 2015